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## **THE INTEREST OF THE CHURCHES IN EDUCATION**

Address delivered by Robert Lincoln Kelly at the National Citizens' Conference on Education held at Washington, D. C., May 19, 20 and 21, 1920, under the auspices of the Department of the Interior. Stenographic Report.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Commissioner, Members of the Conference: The Vice President of the United States made the observation in his keynote address at Indianapolis the other day that the time has now come when the lines of demarcation between the three federal departments should be drawn a little more closely than they have been during the war period, and when one department should cease to interfere with the prerogatives and functions of the other departments. It is true that we have three departments in our federal government—the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial. It is certainly desirable that each one of these departments maintain, in so far as it is possible, its proper place and carry out its function as provided for in the Constitution and that it interfere as little as possible with the other departments within constitutional limits. It also, however, is very desirable that all of these departments work together for the common good for the upbuilding of our republic and it certainly would be a great calamity if any one of these departments should cease to function.

Now, just as there are three great departments in the federal government, I call your attention to the fact that in the social structure of this country there are three fundamental agencies—the Home, the Church and the School. They have a common task; they are partners in the same work. They have essentially the same ideals. Each one must maintain its identity but each must work with the other two. When I am asked to answer the question, therefore,—“What is the interest of the churches in education?” I have simply to reply that the interest of the churches in education is the same as the interest of one partner in the work of the other partners in a common cause. In a certain sense two of these agencies, the church and the school, were born in America at the same time. They have been cooperating since their birth and the interest and progress of one is bound up in the interest and progress of the other. As institutions they are not responsible for their original partnership, but that partner-

ship has been revived and revised and restated from generation to generation and from decade to decade, although the form has been somewhat changed.

We all know that in every backwoods community of pioneer days there were first erected a few log cabins which were to be the homes of the settlers. Then there was erected a log cabin which was to be the meeting-house or the chapel, for those same settlers, and immediately thereafter there was erected another log cabin which was to be the school. And those three agencies represent the fundamental ideals of this republic of ours. To adapt the words of the British Ambassador in the conference this morning, "This is the way the system of American education grew out of virgin soil. These are the elements which make up the genius of the American people."

A splendid illustration of this close partnership between religion and education is found in the organization and progress of the colonial colleges, those colleges which were founded early in New England, and in the Middle States and in the South—Yale and Harvard and Kings and Princeton and William and Mary and the rest. It is a significant fact and a historic fact, well known to you, that they were all founded by the churches; that they were founded for a definite purpose, although that purpose expressed itself in dual form. To use a quaint quotation from the charter of Yale, the purpose of that institution was "to fit men for public employment in the church and civic state." This was the dual program of all of them. The founders of those early educational institutions did not discriminate between the function of religion and the function of education.

And that those institutions were true to their trust is indicated by the type of product which they produced. On the alumni lists of those colonial colleges are to be found such names as John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, James Monroe, John Marshall, James Otis, Josiah Quincy—men who, with others like themselves laid the foundations, the civic foundations, of our republic. At the same time that those colleges were producing such men "fit for employment in the civic state"—at the same time and in the same classes there were graduating Increase Mather and Cotton Mather, and Jonathon Edwards and Samuel Hawkins, Nathaniel Adams, Timothy Dwight, Joseph Bellamy—great outstanding

apostles of righteousness, who, together with others like themselves, laid the ecclesiastical foundations of this republic of ours. Religion and education were wedded in the inception of educational work in this country. Since colonial days hundreds of colleges have been founded across this continent, in every state except three or four, by the churches, and today out of more than five hundred such colleges—standard colleges recognized by the Bureau of Education and by the other standardizing agencies of the United States, more than four hundred of them are organically connected with the churches or are affiliated with the churches, while most of the other one hundred were founded by the churches and maintain today the most kindly and intimate relationships, of an unofficial character.

It is true also that the American public school came forth from the same sort of impulse, namely, the religious impulse. Horace Mann, as we all know full well, was a minister of religion as well as a minister of education, and no better confirmation of this vital relationship between these two great American ideals need be cited than that preamble of the Ordinance of 1787 which provided for the government of the Northwest Territory, words with which you are familiar and which no doubt you could all join me in repeating in a common chorus, words which ought to be burned into the imagination of every American boy and girl—"Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged,"

In the great state universities of the Middle West today, those universities which enroll tens of thousands of students, and which, so far as their organic structure is concerned are as far removed as possible from the influence of the church—in those universities from sixty to seventy per cent of the young men and women enrolled come from the homes of church members. Those who have visited our land-grant colleges in recent years with the view of testing the temper of them and determining the spirit of them, and with the thought in mind as to whether or not in those great state-supported institutions these fundamental ideals of education are still being maintained, testify that the students in these institutions are characterized by the healthiness, saneness and hopefulness of their religious life.

The British ambassador named as super-products of education—as the things which the British people prize more highly than knowledge as such, courage, cheerfulness, sympathy and humility. Those, he said, are the super-products of British education. I suppose we would all agree that there has never been a greater American teacher than Mark Hopkins. After he had had the experience of fifty years as a basis for judging as to what are the important elements in educational procedure, he said, “Christianity is the greatest civilizing, moulding, uplifting power on this globe and it is a sad defect of any institution of higher learning, if it does not bring those under its care into the closest possible relationship with it.” It is my conviction that no more disastrous thing could happen to our civilization, and because of the influence we may have in the world in the next generation, no more disastrous thing could happen to the world in this great struggle to which the Governor has just referred, than that the tie should be severed that binds together religion and education. It will be a sad day if American education becomes dominantly militaristic. It will be a sad day if American education becomes dominantly vocational if by vocational you put the making of a living above the making of a life and in these days, when the minds of men are bewildered and unsettled, it certainly behooves us carefully to see that these fundamental ideals of American education are maintained and perpetuated.

A British subject located temporarily in the late Ottoman empire remarked the other day to an American citizen: “Wherever the Germans go you will find an arsenal; wherever the French go you will find a railroad; wherever the British go you will find a customs house; and wherever the Americans go you will find a school house.” Now, if the school house is indeed the symbol of America’s message to mankind, then we must use, if we can, great care and wisdom in selecting the forces that play within and about the school house.

I come to you as the representative of the educational organizations of the churches to say that the churches are the friends of the American teacher. But they are not recently converted friends. They have been the teachers’ friends from the beginning, and they expect to remain the friends of the teachers to the end. Many of the representatives of the

churches can understand thoroughly the present predicament of the teachers because of which this conference was called, in that preachers as a class have even smaller salaries than teachers. The churches today are trying to show their friendship to the teachers; they are not attempting to show that friendship merely by lip service, by sympathy and by prayers—although I assume the teachers would approve of and appreciate all those methods of showing friendship, but the churches of America today are attempting to show their friendship by contributions of cold cash. Since the Armistice day many denominations in this country have put on great forward movements, hoping thereby to be able to render a greater service to this bewildered world at home and abroad. These forward movements are essentially educational campaigns. Their main purpose, to be sure, is to assist in every legitimate way in extending the influence of the Golden Rule, but their method is primarily and almost entirely the method of education. As a condition of these campaigns of education these churches have recently had great financial drives. To be specific, since the Armistice, the Methodist Episcopal Churches North and South have raised one hundred and sixty-five million dollars for their forward movement. The Southern Baptists have raised ninety millions of dollars. The Presbyterian Church North has raised sixty millions of dollars; the Episcopal Church, forty millions of dollars, and the Interchurch World Movement, which is in the midst of its financial campaign, has already secured subscriptions amounting to approximately \$178,000,000.\* Although this is not a complete list of the efforts of the churches in this particular, it does indicate a total of over five hundred million dollars for the development of these forward movements. Now a considerable portion of this money is to be invested as endowments in schools and colleges and is to go to the increase of the salaries of officers and teachers in the various types of American institutions of learning, including the church workers in the tax supported institutions. As an illustration of the carefulness with which this work has been done, may I cite the case of the Interchurch World Movement

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\*There is a partial duplication here between the Interchurch and the Centenary Campaigns, \$21,000,000 of the Interchurch total being contributed by the Centenary Movement.

which is now conducting a survey of American education so comprehensive in scope that it will have for study and interpretation the largest accumulation of facts bearing on higher education in this country that has ever been brought together. Already numerous national educational associations have accepted the invitation to appoint commissions to assist in digesting this material and in planning educational programs for the several states.

Furthermore, it may be said that this is merely the beginning of the great forward and co-operating movements of the churches. Just at this moment the Methodist Episcopal Church South is organizing a campaign for \$25,000,000 for its educational institutions alone and the Methodist Episcopal Church is at work on a proposed campaign for \$140,000,000 for the educational activities of that denomination. Other great plans are being formulated. The upshot of it all will be that narrow sectarianism will be eliminated from this country as the years go on and the churches will combine in a co-operative movement which will make them more efficient than they have ever been before in developing the educational interests of our great republic. They wish to assist in the great process of Americanization, not only of our neighbors who come to us from across the seas, but of our own boys and girls, including that twenty-five per cent of our own boys who cannot read or write, and that thirty-three per cent of our own boys who are not now qualified for combat service. The churches offer to help in adding "color" to American education, to recur again to the Ambassador's phraseology of the morning, to help in any and every way possible in further developing that outstanding quality of American and British education by virtue of which these two great nations have tried to instill in the minds of their youth the ideals of liberty, of justice and of righteousness. Certainly educational statesmanship, if it is wise, cannot ignore the aspirations and interest of the churches. The churches wish to assist in maintaining the integrity of our institutions and in restoring the happiness and prosperity of mankind.